

IN THE CLAIMS

*The status of the claims as presently amended is as follows:*

1. (*Currently Amended*) An image forming apparatus comprising:

a storage-device unit that stores apparatus identification information for identifying the image forming apparatus, and a plurality of programs for realizing optional functions, respectively;

a program management-device unit that holds start program identification information indicative of whether each of the plurality of programs has been set to a program to be executed at a start of the image forming apparatus, in association with each of the plurality of programs; and

a license management-device unit that permits use of the plurality of programs on a program-by-program basis; and,

wherein said license management-device unit comprises:

a license information acquisition-device unit that acquires license information including apparatus specifying information and program specifying information for specifying a program designated from an external device as a program unit to be executed at the start of the image forming apparatus;

a setting unit that sets a program to be executed at the start of the image forming apparatus; and

a determination-device comparison unit that determines compares the program that has been set by said setting unit to the program identified by the start program identification information, by referring to the start program identification information held by said program management-device unit, whether the program identified by the program identification-information has been set to a program to be executed at the start of the image forming-apparatus, when the apparatus specifying information included in the license information acquired by said license information acquisition-device unit and the apparatus identification information stored in said storage-device unit match, and the program specified by the program specifying information included in the license information is identical to any of the plurality of programs; and,

a setting device that wherein said setting unit sets the program specified by the program specifying information to a program to be executed at the start of the image forming apparatus, when said determination-device determines that the program specified by the program

specifying information has not been set to a program to be executed at the start of the image forming apparatus as the result of comparison by said comparison unit.

2. (*Currently Amended*) An image forming apparatus as claimed in claim 1, further comprising an input-device unit via which information ~~can be inputted~~ is inputtable by operation of an operator, and an external storage-device unit that holds the license information, and wherein said license information acquisition-device unit is responsive to input of predetermined instruction information via said input-device unit by the operation of the operator, for reading and acquiring the license information from said external storage-device unit.

3. (*Currently Amended*) An image forming apparatus as claimed in claim 1, further comprising a communication-device unit that communicates with an external-device unit having a function of inputting the license information by operation of an operator, and a function of transmitting the license information inputted by the operation of the operator, and wherein said license information acquisition-device unit receives and acquires the license information transmitted from the external-device unit, via said communication-device unit.

4. (*Currently Amended*) An image forming apparatus as claimed in claim 1, further comprising a communication-device unit that communicates with an external-device unit capable of holding the license information, and an inquiry-device unit that periodically inquires of the external device unit via said communication-device unit whether the license information is held in the external-device unit, and wherein said license information acquisition-device unit is responsive to a notification that the license information is held in the external-device unit, given by the external-device unit in response to the inquiry, for acquiring the license information from the external-device unit via said communication-device unit.

5. (*Currently Amended*) An image forming apparatus as claimed in claim 1, further comprising a clock-device unit that outputs time information, and wherein the license information includes an expiration date of the program specified thereby, and wherein said license management-device unit further comprises:

a license information holding ~~device~~ unit that holds the license information associated with each of programs set ~~to a program~~ to be executed at the start of the image forming apparatus;

an expiration date determining ~~device~~ unit that compares the expiration date included in the license information associated with each of the programs set ~~to a program~~ to be executed at the start of the image forming apparatus with the time information outputted from said clock device unit, to thereby determine whether the expiration date has passed; and

a limiting ~~device~~ unit that limits execution of each of the programs set ~~to a program~~ to be executed at the start of the image forming apparatus, based on a result of the determination by said expiration date determining ~~device~~ unit.

6. (*Currently Amended*) An image forming apparatus as claimed in claim 1, further comprising a totalizing ~~device~~ unit that totalizes amounts of usage of apparatus resources used by operation of the programs on a program-by-program basis, and

wherein the license information includes an upper limit of an amount of usage of resources usable by each program specified by the license information, and

wherein said license management ~~device~~ unit further comprises:

a license information holding ~~device~~ unit that holds the license information associated with each of programs set ~~to a program~~ to be executed at the start of the image forming apparatus;

a usage determining ~~device~~ unit that determines whether the amount of usage of the apparatus resources used by each of the programs set ~~to a program~~ to be executed at the start of the image forming apparatus has reached the upper limit thereof; and

a limiting ~~device~~ unit that limits execution of each of the programs set ~~to a program~~ to be executed at the start of the image forming apparatus, based on a result of the determination by said usage determining ~~device~~ unit.

7. (*Currently Amended*) An image forming apparatus as claimed in claim 1, wherein the license information comprises encrypted information, and said license management ~~device~~ unit further comprises a decrypting ~~device~~ unit that decrypts the license information.

8. (*Currently Amended*) A method of controlling an image forming apparatus including a storage ~~device~~ unit that stores apparatus identification information for identifying the image

forming apparatus, and a plurality of programs for realizing optional functions, respectively, and a program management device unit that holds start program identification information indicative of whether each of the plurality of programs has been set to a program to be executed at a start of the image forming apparatus, in association with each of the plurality of programs,

the method comprising:

a license information acquisition step of acquiring license information including apparatus specifying information and program specifying information for specifying a program designated from an external device as a program unit to be executed at the start of the image forming apparatus;

a setting step of setting a program to be executed at the start of the image forming apparatus; and

a determination comparison step of determining comparing the program that has been set by said setting step to the program identified by the start program identification information, by referring to the start program identification information held by said program management device unit, whether the program identified by the program identification information has been set to a program to be executed at the start of the image forming apparatus, when the apparatus specifying information included in the license information acquired in said license information acquisition step and the apparatus identification information stored in said storage device unit match, and the program specified by the program specifying information included in the license information is identical to any of the plurality of programs; and,

a setting wherein said setting step of setting sets the program specified by the program specifying information to a program to be executed at the start of the image forming apparatus, when it is determined in said determination step that the program specified by the program specifying information has not been set to a program to be executed at the start of the image forming apparatus as the result of comparison by said comparison step.

9. (Currently Amended) A computer-readable medium storing a computer program for controlling an image forming apparatus including a storage device unit that stores apparatus identification information for identifying the image forming apparatus, and a plurality of programs for realizing optional functions, respectively, and a program management device unit that holds start program identification information indicative of whether each of the plurality of programs has been set to a program to be executed at a start of the image forming apparatus, in association with each of the plurality of programs,

the computer program comprising:

a license information acquisition ~~module~~ instruction for acquiring license information including apparatus specifying information and program specifying information for specifying a program designated from an external device as a program unit to be executed at the start of the image forming apparatus;

a setting instruction for setting a program to be executed at the start of the image forming apparatus; and

a determination module comparison instruction for determining comparing the program that has been set by said setting instruction to the start program identified by the program identification information, by referring to the start program identification information held by said program management device unit, ~~whether the program identified by the program identification information has been set to a program to be executed at the start of the image forming apparatus,~~ when the apparatus specifying information included in the license information acquired by in said license information acquisition ~~module~~ instruction and the apparatus identification information stored in said storage ~~device~~ unit match, and the program specified by the program specifying information included in the license information is identical to any of the plurality of programs; and

a setting module for setting wherein the setting instruction sets the program specified by the program specifying information ~~to a program~~ to be executed at the start of the image forming apparatus, when it is ~~determined by said determination module that~~ the program specified by the program specifying information has not been set ~~to a program~~ to be executed at the start of the image forming apparatus as the result of comparison by said comparison instruction.

10. (Currently Amended) A computer-readable storage medium storing a program for controlling an image forming apparatus including a storage device unit that stores apparatus identification information for identifying the image forming apparatus, and a plurality of programs for realizing optional functions, respectively, and a program management device unit that holds start program identification information indicative of whether each of the plurality of programs has been set ~~to a program~~ to be executed at a start of the image forming apparatus, in association with each of the plurality of programs,

the program comprising:

a license information acquisition module for acquiring license information including apparatus specifying information and program specifying information for specifying a program

designated from an external device as a ~~program~~ unit to be executed at the start of the image forming apparatus;

a setting module for setting a program to be executed at the start of the image forming apparatus; and

a determination comparison module for ~~determining~~ comparing the program that has been set by said setting module to the program identified by the start program identification information, by referring to the start program identification information held by said program management device unit, ~~whether the program identified by the program identification information has been set to a program to be executed at the start of the image forming apparatus,~~ when the apparatus specifying information included in the license information acquired by said license information acquisition module and the apparatus identification information stored in said storage ~~device~~ unit match, and the program specified by the program specifying information included in the license information is identical to any of the plurality of programs; and

a wherein said setting module for setting sets the program specified by the program specifying information ~~to a program~~ to be executed at the start of the image forming apparatus, when it is ~~determined by said determination module that~~ the program specified by the program specifying information has not been set ~~to a program~~ to be executed at the start of the image forming apparatus as the result of comparison by said comparison module.